

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAPE T 00076 011900Z

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 IO-14 DRC-01 /137 W

----- 038675

R 011545Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3724

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

T

GS: PINT, SF

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION IN DISARRAY ON EVE OF ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: AS SOUTH AFRICA'S PARLIAMENT BEGAN 1974 SESSION TODAY, OPPOSITION UNITED PARTY (UP) ONCE AGAIN IN DISARRAY AND IN POOR POSITION TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN PARLIAMENT. MOREOVER, UP'S INTERNAL SQUABBLES DIMINISH FURTHER ITS ALREADY UNLIKELY CHANCE OF ADDING TO ITS PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION AT NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, WHICH EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE IN APRIL OR MAY. END SUMMARY.

1. STATE PRESIDENT FOCHE OFFICIALLY OPENED 1974 PARLIAMENT THIS MORNING. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT'S SPEECH OF SOME INTEREST (8 SEPT), OPENING OF SESSION LARGELY A CEREMONIAL OCCASION
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PAGE 02 CAPE T 00076 011900Z

AND REAL ACTION WILL NOT BEGIN UNTIL MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4,

WHEN BUSINESS OF PARLIAMENT BEGINS WITH NO CONFIDENCE
DEBATE.

2. LEADER OF OPPOSITION SIR DE VILLIERS GRAAFF WILL LEAD
OFF WITH SPEECH ATTACKING NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT'S DOMESTIC
AND FOREIGN POLICIES. HOWEVER, PACKED GALLERIES OF
PARLIAMENT WILL BE SAVING THEIR FULLEST ATTENTION FOR
EXPECTED REPLY BY PRIME MINISTER VORSTER. NOT ONLY IS
IT ANTICIPATED HE WILL ANNOUNCE DATE OF EARLY GENERAL
ELECTION, BUT ALSO UNITED PARTY HAS GIVEN HIM FULL
OPPORTUNITY TO DEFLECT GRAAFF'S ATTACK AND MAKE A
SHAMBLES OF UP'S ATTEMPT TO PUT GOVERNMENT ON DEFENSIVE.

3. THROUGHOUT PAST YEAR UP HAS SUFFERED FROM INTERNAL
STRESSES BORN OF CONFLICT BETWEEN ITS LIBERAL AND CONSERVA-
TIVE WINGS. GRAAFF HAS SKILLFULLY PAPERED OVER THESE
TROUBLES, MOST RECENTLY ONLY A WEEK AGO (CAPE TOWN 0054).
BUT ONCE AGAIN, AND OF ALL TIMES ON EVE OF GENERAL ELECTIONS,
FISSIPAROUS TENDENCY OF UP HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF AND PARTY
IS IN SERIOUS DISARRAY. A FACADE OF UNITY WILL NO DOUBT
BE ERECTED, BUT SERIOUS DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE TO UP'S
ALREADY WEAKENED ABILITY TO FUNCTION AS EFFECTIVE OPPOS-
ITION IN PARLIAMENT, AND EVEN MORE PERHAPS TO ITS POWER
TO ATTRACT VOTES AWAY FROM EITHER VORSTER'S NATIONAL PARTY
(NP) OR THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY.

4. LATEST ISSUES BEDEVILLING UP ARE HARRY SCHWARZ'
UNAUTHORIZED FORAY INTO NATAL AND SIGNING OF DECLARATION OF
FAITH WITH CHIEF GATSHA BUTHELEZI (PRETORIA 0092) AND
CONTROVERSY OVER NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENTARY
SEATS IN SEVERAL CAPE CONSTITUENCIES. AFTER DELIBERATING
FOR OVER TWO DAYS, UP'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS UNANIMOUSLY
ENDORSED A RESOLUTION JANUARY 31 UPHOLDING GRAAFF'S PREVIOUS
REPRIMAND OF SCHWARZ. SINCE THIS ACTION APPROVED BY SOME
INDIVIDUALS SYMPATHETIC TO SCHWARZ, AS WELL AS BY THOSE WHO
INTENSELY DISLIKE HIM, REPRIMAND SEEN AS A COMPROMISE
FALLING FAR SHORT OF WHAT HIS ENEMIES MIGHT HAVE WISHED
BUT ENOUGH TO PLACATE THEIR ANGER.

5. STILL UNRESOLVED IS FIGHT OVER NOMINATIONS. UP'S CAPE
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PAGE 03 CAPE T 00076 011900Z

PROVINCIAL CANDIDATE'S COMMITTEE, DOMINATED BY CONSERVATIVES,
HAD IN FOUR CASES OVERRIDDEN DIVISIONAL NOMINATING COMMITTEES'
DECISIONS TO NOMINATE LIBERAL CANDIDATES. ENSUING CONTROVERSY
HAS INCLUDED POSSIBILITY OF MASS RESIGNATIONS AT DIVISIONAL
LEVEL IN TWO CONSTITUENCIES (WYNBERG AND GARDENS) AND ADDED
TO UP'S ALREADY WEAK POSITION IN FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS. IT
LIKELY, THOUGH, THAT GRAAFF CAN EFFECT SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE.

6. COMPROMISES NOTWITHSTANDING, UP'S UNITY IS FRAGILE AND ITS INTERNAL DIFFERENCES HAVE BEEN REPEATEDLY AND THOROUGHLY PARADED FOR ALL TO SEE. AS A RESULT, PRIME MINISTER AND HIS PARTY ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS SESSION OF PARLIAMENT, AND PROBABLY TO ELECTIONS, WITH UNDISGUISED GLEE. VORSTER HAS EXPRESSED PRIVATELY HIS GREAT PLEASURE AT THE OPPOSITIONS FUMBLINGS AND DISCOMFITURE.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND, UP SUPPORTERS ARE GLOOMY. JOHANNESBURG STAR HAS EDITORIALIZED THAT IF UP ESTABLISHMENT "PUT THEMSELVES AND ALL THEIR OWN NOMINEES UP FOR ELECTION, TO THE EXCLUSION OF DYNAMIC NEW BLOOD," IT WILL NOT BE WORTHWHILE TO VOTE IN GENERAL ELECTION. IN ITS LATEST EDITION, FINANCIAL MAIL STATED THAT NATIONAL PARTY "WILL SOON BE LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE POLLS--ASSUMING THEIR CANDIDATES DON'T DIE OF HYSTERIA WHEN THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION RISES TO PRESENT HIS MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE." FINANCIAL MAIL ADDED THAT WHAT IS NEEDED IS CHANGE OF UP'S LEADERSHIP.

8. UP'S DIFFICULTIES WILL NOT MAKE ALL THAT MUCH DIFFERENCE IN OUTCOME OF GENERAL ELECTION. NP IN ANY EVENT WAS EXPECTED RETAIN MOST OF ITS CURRENT HEAVY MAJORITY OR EVEN SLIGHTLY IMPROVE ON IT. NP'S STRENGTH IN AFRIKANERDOM AND BLOW DEALT TO UP BY RECENT CONSTITUENCY DELIMITATION HAVE ENSURED THIS. HOWEVER, A TRULY UNITED UP WHOSE PERFORMANCE COULD HAVE GIVEN CONFIDENCE TO ITS SUPPORTERS AND ATTRACTED SOME VOTES FROM NP AND PROGRESSIVE CAMPS MIGHT HAVE MADE A STRONGER SHOWING AND PERHAPS PICKED UP SOME MARGINAL SEATS. THIS NOW APPEARS MOST UNLIKELY.

SMITH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION REFORM, NOMINATION, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974CAPET00076
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: CAPE TOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740263/aaaacgwg.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 APR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <03 JUN 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OPPOSITION IN DISARRAY ON EVE OF ELECTIONS SUMMARY: AS SOUTH AFRICA'S PARLIAMENT BEGAN 1974 SESSION
TAGS: PINT, NP, SF, UP, (VORSTER, BALTHAZAR JOHANNES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005